



## Alaska Shorebird Group

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### Alaska Shorebird Group – 2007 Annual meeting

(held on 6 March 2008 from 4-6pm, Westmark Hotel, Fairbanks, Alaska)

**Attendees:** Audrey Taylor (UAF), Rick Lanctot (USFWS-MBM), Joe Liebezeit (WCS), Erin Cooper (USFS-Cordova), River Gates (UAF,USFWS), Abby Powell (USGS AKCFWRU), Steve Kendall (USFWS-ArcticNWR), Brooke McFarland (UAF), Brian Guzetti (USGS, UAF), Bob Gill (USGS), Stephen Brown (Manomet), Ramone McCoy (BLM), Kristine Sowl (USFWS-IzembekNWR), John Haddix (CSU), Colleen Handel (USGS), Susan Savage (USFWS, AKpen./Bech.), Lee Tibbets (USGS), Chris Harwood (USFWS-KanutiNWR), Jim Johnson (USFWS-MBM), Nathan Coutsubos (UAF-USFWS), Steve Zack (WCS), Tina Moran (Selawik NWR), Philip Martin (USFWS), Rick Johnson (ABR), Lynn Fuller (PCJV), Caryn Rea (CPAI), Pam Seiser (ABR), Diane Tracy, Stan Senner (Audubon Alaska), Mike Goldstein (USFS-Juneau), Julie Morse (Equinox Ecological), Dan Ruthrauff (USGS-ACS), Meg Hahr (NPS-Seward), Dave Payer (USFWS-ArcticNWR), Mary Rabe (ADFG), Paul Meyers (USFS-Cordova), Debbie Nigro (BLM), Karen S. Bollinger (USFWS), Iain Stenhouse (Audubon Alaska), Vivian Mendenhall, Phil Bruner (BYU Hawaii), Michael Swaim (USFWS-Togiak), Dave Tessler (ADFG),

Great turnout! – went around room with brief introductions from each attendee

First hour of meeting - Updates from recent events:

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Shorebird Science in the Western Hemisphere meeting, Venezuela, May 2007

Rick L.:

There have been two Shorebird western hemisphere meetings in recent years. **The third meeting is scheduled for March 2009 in Sinaloa Mexico.** This third meeting is designed to broaden the overall meeting agenda from primarily research to an agenda that will include research, monitoring, education, site-based conservation, and other topics.

The May 2007 Venezuela meeting was a smaller meeting piggybacked on Neotropical Ornithological Congress held in Maturin. There were 3 major symposiums held:

1. Nearctic shorebirds – wintering in South America
2. Birds endemic to South America – it was recognized that there is not much info available – wide open area for research
3. WHSRN symposium – Argentina had a strong showing; a lot of education and outreach was discussed

In addition, the “Hudsonian Godwit Working Group” and the “Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group” held meetings. The latter was used to introduce the “shorebird group” concept to South American participants. Summaries of these symposium and abstracts

for the talks were recently published in the Wader Study Group Bulletin (Vol. 113:15-27).

There was discussion on the role of the “Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group”. It was proposed that this group would be an umbrella group in which fit the Shorebird Research Group of the Americas (SRGA), the Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring (PRISM), outreach programs, site-based conservation (WHSRN), the US and Canadian national councils, etc. The goal of the umbrella group was to clearly delineate the roles of each of the smaller entities. The other primary mission of the umbrella group would be to hold biannual meetings where all these people can come together. The Pacific Seabird Group was held as a template for this overall plan however it will be a tougher task to organize because this necessitates dealing with South American and Central American efforts as well. Travel money will be available to get students from different countries together at subsequent meeting.

Lee Tibbets went to the meeting. She said it was well attended with a lot of excitement.

- Over 50 people attended the Venezuelan Western Hemisphere meeting – only 9 from North America, so an excellent international turnout.
- Rick L. and many co-authors have submitted an (Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act) NMBCA proposal to get website created that all different entities would be a part of, providing a clearing house on shorebird information. A website like this was desired by Latin America colleagues especially. Such a site would provide answers to basic questions but also be available by everyone to communicate and keep up on what shorebird people are doing in the Western Hemisphere. We should hear from NMBCA by March/April 2008 whether it will be funded.

### **International Wader Study Group Meeting**

Bob Gill:

Was held in LaRouchelle France this past year, next it will be in Poland and then in the Netherlands. Bob Gill has stepped down as the North American representative. Nils Warnock of PRBO is now taking over that position. Bob Gill didn't go to the LaRouchelle meeting so he couldn't comment on the details for the meeting.

Brian Guzzetti was at the meeting and said the oystercatcher symposium went well. He mentioned that a geneticist announced preliminary results that suggest the Black Oystercatcher is no longer its own species, but should actually be lumped with the American Oystercatcher! These results have not been published as of yet and seem tentative since sample sizes in this study are reported low.

### **Asian-Pacific Shorebird Network** ([www.shorbirdnetwork.org](http://www.shorbirdnetwork.org))

Robert Gill:

No meeting was held this year due to a restructuring of the network. Shorebirds will again have their own working group – deciding on new terms of reference. New meeting not planned yet.

### **Shorebird Research group of the Americas** (SRGA, see [www.shorebirdresearch.org](http://www.shorebirdresearch.org))

Stephen. Brown:

Research arm of this broader group – facilitate coordination from others, section organized around working groups – put up info on your particular group, also announcement of the meeting. Need people to sign up!

S. Brown looking for someone to help him organize the Scientific section of the next Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group meeting in Sinaloa, Mexico (this organizer will help figure out who will participate, call for abstracts, soliciting symposia topics, designing a website?, how much to charge, etc... but NOT logistics). Manomet has successfully raised \$20K from NFWF grant to support travel of students and Latin Americans to meeting. SRGA Focus will be on research of limiting factors for declining birds. The exact timing of the meeting hasn't been nailed down yet. They are trying to balance between the Latin and North American breeding seasons. Regardless, it will be sometime in March 2009.

### **Program of Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring (PRISM)**

Rick L. on Arctic PRISM:

PRISM goal: Provide region-wide information on abundance and diversity of birds. Arctic PRISM (designed by J.Bart) – being implemented in Canada, also in Alaska (double-sampling). In 2008, there are plans to go back to the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area again for the second round of sampling.

Original goal of PRISM was to develop a monitoring program and plan that would aid in acquiring funds to survey birds. However, this hasn't really worked out. So for now, PRISM is being implemented on backs of other projects – Lee Tibbets – Boreal PRISM; no update for now.

Rick Lanctot – Temperate PRISM: In general it is quite species-specific with species of concern (snowy plovers, long-billed curlews, piping plover) getting the most focus. They plan to monitor every 5 years. The program is going along but there is a lot of debate on numbers that are coming out.

### **Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN)**

S. Brown – WHSRN – ([www.whsrn.org](http://www.whsrn.org)) update:

Background: WHSRN is a network of voluntary sites that are important for shorebirds  
Three new sites were added recently:

1. Ensenada (Mexico?)
  2. Ascension Bay in Uruguay
  3. Another site in Mexico (?)
- WHSRN is trying to help coordinate species conservation plans. This may also help make a case for funding.
  - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) gave a large grant to WHSRN specifically in helping with designating Latin America sites.
  - There is a new effort by WHSRN and coordinating with Wetlands International to affect rice management.

### **Shorebird Sister Schools Program**

Rick providing update (for an absent Tamara Mills):

The program is currently not doing very well because person in charge hasn't been able to devote time to this as much as other things. Also, there is a constant turn-over of

teachers (burn out rate of teachers has been high). The immediate plan to remedy this is to outsource from USFWS to nonprofit outdoor education groups.

### **Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative (CRIMBI)**

Erin Cooper:

This shorebird education program has been running for 6 years and is a distance learning program using satellite broadcasts to reach participants across North America. They shoot a show and there is a live feed to classroom. This program is coordinated with the Shorebird Sister Schools program and uses that curriculum. In May of 2007 there was a very successful series of broadcasts that followed western sandpipers north on their spring migration route, and included live webcasts and chats from the Stikine River Delta, the Copper River Delta, and the North Slope (Prudhoe Bay) in Alaska. Several members of the ASG were featured in these webcasts, which also included the governor of Alaska (Sarah Palin) and representative Lisa Murkowski.

- CRIMBI has a Spanish speaking program as well
- The shows have been well-received – kids can call in at the end of the show – but it does cost a lot of money. Target age: 4-8 grade
- They have had live events in Panama, Mexico, San Francisco, Fraser River Delta, Copper River Delta, and the North Slope (Audrey)
- On another note, the Stikine river delta is up for WHSRN nomination – what are the economic benefits of WHSRN? Promo coming through for Cordova, etc.
- They are doing remote mapping on certain sites – Stikine, other WHSRN sites too
- Who is involved in CRIMBI: US forest service, Ducks Unlimited, Audubon Alaska (S. Senner on live t.v.), etc.
- migration science and is an excellent outreach tool

Stan S. commented that though very successful and important, the program is very extensive and labor intensive – required 20+ people with cameras/sound. A big challenge is: How do you make this into more than a one time deal? This is only way to get larger impact over the long-term.

- Still can watch Migration Science & Mystery on web.

### **International Black Oystercatcher working group**

Dave Tessler – update:

- At the International Wader Study group meeting in France they held a smaller focused meeting on all the oystercatchers in the world. Dave reported the successful completion of the Black Oystercatcher conservation plan, which is being used as a template for other other species.
  - Wader study group bulletin featured 13 papers on all the oystercatcher species
  - Reiterated (from Brian Guzzetti's early comment) that there's a geneticist that suggests Black Oystercatcher are not a separate species from American Oystercatcher – evidence based on low sample size so not conclusive.

### **Southern Wings program**

Mary Rabe – update:

This program was created by the Association of Fish and Wildlife agencies with the specific intent of helping out Latin American bird conservation. However, the program has slowed down and is working on building support. Some of the states are wondering why they should send money out of country. Also, the mechanism to do this is difficult

- For more information there is a website: google “southern wings program”

### **Important Bird Areas**

Iain Stenhouse:

- 40 new sites added to the Alaska list in last few years (about 12 are designated largely or entirely on shorebirds)
- Iain said that they can always use more help to get sites on the map so please consider this for an area you do work in.
- Rick L. asked for comment: What do you do with breeding areas that have low numbers of birds but are important– draw a bigger circle to get 1%?
  - Iain responded by saying there is no clear solution to this yet although ultimate decisions vary from site to site
  - S.Brown: This is a similar issue at WHSRN sites. One solution is to create “landscapes” of importance (e.g. prairie pothole). More complicated to do this but working on it.
  - Rick: How about species richness as an alternative to abundance? Iain: This criterion was dropped because overwhelmed with sites.
  - S. Senner: this is a “trade-off kind of deal”. The entire Arctic Coastal Plain could be an IBA but it wouldn’t mean anything at that large scale. Something that has sufficient number of birds but also has management boundary is best.
  - Michael: How many of WHSRN & IBA sites overlap? All WHSRN sites also qualify as IBAs, but not all IBAs are WHSRN sites.

### **Other miscellaneous updates/comments:**

- Please tell Rick Lanctot if you want to be on the Alaska Shorebird Workgroup listserve. Contact him at Richard\_lanctot@fws.gov
- Stephen Brown is coordinating volunteer shorebird survey network (the International Shorebird Survey). They have already identified sites on east coast and have filled them with volunteers. However they still need work on west coast; PRBO may help out with this. The information obtained contributes to management-based info at particular sites. Cornell lab of Ornithology has made a portal for Ebird to enter shorebird counts (citizen science). If you have volunteers you can have them enter this data – can be kept proprietary for a time if needed.
- Stan Senner update
  - What is happening on regulatory of Red Knot – is petition for red listing – some opportunity for public comment. So Stan may alert people on this when the time comes. Still some action in the NJ legislature.
- Rick Lanctot and Joe Liebezeit did summaries of on-going Alaska studies for 2006 & 2007 – hardcopy summaries are here – please take one.

Final discussion regarded the **Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan**

The plan is scheduled to be finished with in the next few months. This is needed as a way to set research/management/conservation priorities for shorebird populations in Alaska, and to promote action on the part of the ASG and its members.

- The final preparation of the plan has been contracted out to Julie Morse of Equinox Ecological.
- Julie Morse: Dan Ruthrauff and Jim Johnson put a lot of the pieces of the plan in place. They have good expert comments and the plan has good momentum - there is a draft!
  - One section is an overview of Alaska
  - Part II – each BCR section is reviewed
  - Still recruiting help on BCR4, others in good shape
- Dan Ruthrauff: having Julie we've made good progress and have gotten a lot of input from people
- Rick Lanctot: a lot of progress but not done. Will get to a point where it will be circulated around. BCRs have specific actions. The thought was that part I wouldn't need to be revised much but part II could be reviewed at annual meetings. More of a strategic plan – living document.
- Julie's contract is almost up and there is a need to continue to fund her to continue on with this until we get a glossy document. **If anyone can contribute please contact Rick Lanctot.**
- Phil Brunner: Why make a glossy copy if Part II if it will change? Rick L. – one way to get around this is to include a web address links at specific places in the document where people are told to look for updates.
- There was discussion on whether to print or just include the plan on the web.
- How specific are the actions in part II of the document?– “these are things we need to address” – no timelines so far.
- Rick – thinks we could send this out for minor comments to the larger group that didn't have the opportunity to work on the document. – should post it on listserv.
- Joe: print up fewer big glossy documents of the plan, but more pamphlets
- goal of plan – to be broad across public – need to advertise the plan
- Anyone that has photos to include in the plan – send to Julie ([jmorse@equinoxecological.com](mailto:jmorse@equinoxecological.com))
- plan should be ready within 1 – 1.5 months for version to be reviewed for listserv (1-2 week comment period).
- After the plan is done – then next comes implementation, ways to collaborate, projects as a group.
- Stephen Brown: although there is much to work to be done, the Alaska plan is way ahead of other regional plans so we should be proud.
- Utility of plan will be how and if we will work on it

#### **ASG – Executive Committee issues:**

- There was a call to have at least one teleconference by the ASG Executive Committee one time per year in addition to the meeting. Everyone agreed.

- Stephen Brown & Erin Cooper volunteered to be new committee members (replacing Abby Powell, Colleen Handel)
- Iain Stenhouse is staying on as a committee member
- Our next meeting will be December 2008 (although early Spring might also work)

See [http://alaska.fws.gov/mbsp/mbm/shorebirds/working\\_group.htm](http://alaska.fws.gov/mbsp/mbm/shorebirds/working_group.htm) for information on the Alaska Shorebird Group (terms of reference, meeting minutes, annual summaries of shorebird projects, contact information for Executive Committee).